

Narrative Report Oct. 15--Nov. 14, 1934

Presby. Mission
Wales, Alaska
Nov. 17, 1934

To the Presby. Board
of National Missions,
156 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

Since the last month's report we are somewhat resting a bit easier, for we are more or less situated in the field. The teachers arrived here from Nome the early November and have now begun the school session. Shortly after their arrival, the P.W.A. project within the village was also resumed, and this gave many men the needed funds for family needs. In this project a needed "walk-over-bridge" was built over to our northern section. Prior to this some members of the congregation were kept away from services due to the overflow of the creek.

Unusual event took place within this period as one of our young men discovered a drifted whale carcass on the beach four miles from the village. Every hand available was soon to the spot and within a short time the bloated carcass was distributed among the people. The meat was not edible but it certainly was needed for dog-feed in the community.

This year the ice is late in coming in, so we still have open sea, although ~~we~~ there is much snow on the ground. A week ago two native boats were out after walrus, but only ^{one} came back with a catch. The missionary had been invited to go along as there was a shortage of men in one boat. To one who is fond of sports, walrus hunt is always fascinating. You read of elephant hunts in Africa, of tiger in India, but we in northwestern Alaska pride ourselves in bringing walrus into a village. In the first place, it provides food to the villagers; in the second, ivory from its tusks may be carved and finally sold for "white-man's food". You see we cannot get along without the latter anymore, at least we think so.

The meat from the walrus was evenly distributed among the members of the crew. This missionary's share was given to three or four widows, and was accepted with most gratitude.

Few seals were also caught by men, but more to be had when the ice arrives, we are told.

Our medical service is still limited as the government travelling nurse has made no arrival to date. The school teacher is attempting to do the medical work, but with no previous training along this line, is largely handicapped. We have a few cases of mumps but none serious, outside of one young man who has been taken to Nome by an airplane.

Our church activities are the same as in the previous report but with the addition of Sunday School Teachers' classes.

On October 31st we had a community Hallowe'en party in the church building, as it was the only premise where a large gathering could be held. Several native sports were exhibited. Towards the end refreshments were served, and those supplied by the teacher and the missionary.

Yours respectfully,

Percy Spalook

*Received & forwarded in lieu of
regular report*

*E. L. Wintubeger
Ch. National Missions Comm.
Yukon Presbytery*

Presby. Mission
Wales, Alaska
Dec. 3, 1934

Dr. J. M. Somerndike
156 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

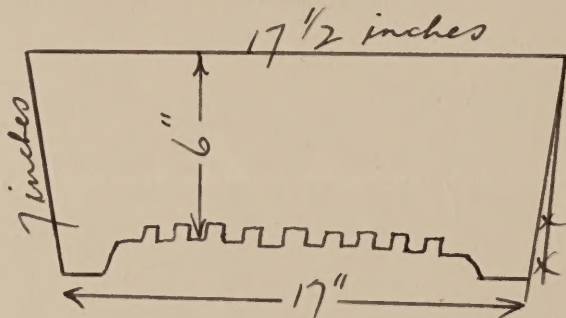
Dear DR. Somerndike:

This letter in reference to a piece of kitchen range that I would like sent along with the groceries by "Holmes" in the coming summer.

I take it for granted that this letter or rather the order is to be forwarded to Mr. Gould of Seattle, who will see to it that I have the piece desired, but that the order has to be approved by you.

The type of the kitchen range is "Ruby Washington", manufactured by Gray and Dudley, Nashville. The number of the range-- No. 218-S.

The piece wanted is a part of the "back" within the fire-box. This is a long piece on the side of the box and next to the end of the range. To make a complete detail and that the exact size may be sent a diagram is made with the measurements:



It will not be necessary to send the rest of the "back" as I have extra pieces along with the extra grates for this range. The piece I referred to above burned out and had to be replaced with the extra piece, but we must have another one for emergency, as it takes several months, and sometimes a year, before we receive what we need.

Yours very sincerely,

Percy Spalook

January
15th
1935

Rev. Percy Ipalook,
Wales, Alaska

Dear Percy:

Replying to your letter of December 3rd,
I am writing to say that I will order the parts which
you need for the kitchen range, to be sent up on the
"Holmes" next summer. You should send me your list at
an early date, showing what you will need in the way of
groceries to be sent up on the "Holmes" for next year's
use.

Faithfully yours,

JMS:BH

May 21st, 1935

Rev. Percy Ipalook
Wales, Alaska

Dear Percy:

I can readily understand your predicament in the mental confusion in which you find yourself on account of the way in which your matrimonial plans have gone awry. As I have read your letter, I have been deeply impressed by the sensible way in which you are viewing the whole situation and I think you are very wise in planning to go up to Kotzebue and have an interview with the young lady in whom you are interested there.

By this time you have received my letter telling you that we have planned to transfer you to Wainwright. I hope that this will be an agreeable arrangement to you. Certainly you will not experience the same difficulties with reference to language which you have experienced at Wales, and that will be a great relief to you, I am sure.

We need not look too far ahead with reference to Point Barrow. Dr. Geist will stay in the work for two years longer if his health holds out. By that time I think that the Presbytery ought to ordain you to the gospel ministry. There really is no reason why they should not do so, although his heart is so set upon your marrying Terza that I fear if things do not turn out as he has planned he will be so enraged that he will be your friend no longer. However, we shall hope that whichever way the wheel of fortune turns, Dr. Geist will accept it and that his friendship toward you will continue. You can count upon at least two years of work at Wainwright anyway, and since there is such a fine opportunity there of building up a strong work, even greater than the work at Barrow, you have a task ahead of you which will challenge all your powers.

Faithfully yours,

Presby. Mission
Wales, Alaska
April 19, 1935

Dr. J.M. Somerndike;
156 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Somerndike:

This is the confidential letter which I referred to in a former letter. It will be personal and I hope that I will not add any that is out of ordinary. But I feel that I should write you of my personal reactions now that I have been in the Mission here for little over ^{half} a year.

Last fall when I first arrived I wrote you a lengthy letter telling you of my discouragements, difficulties, etc. To that letter a reply has been received sometime ago. You stated that there may be a change in the personnel within various stations, but that no definite plan was in view. And that you intimated that I may have to ^{take} up the Barrow church work should Dr. Greist come to complications account of mental aberrations. For this Barrow field I would hesitate somewhat as long as I am not ordained. The congregation there must necessarily have an ordained man for many reasons. At Barrow we have a large congregation, perhaps the largest of any Alaskan Eskimo church. Baptisms of infants are ever demanded. Communion service must be regularly observed. Then again the matrimonial problem. With my limitations I would, as I said, rather hesitate to take the charge there, altho' the language problem would be out of question.

But perhaps for a year or so I do not believe I would have any trouble as a supply, till an efficient man is found to take up the work.

I suppose by this late date you intend to keep me here for the next year. If that is planned, I believe I can go thro' it again for some time. The "baching" has not been as bad as I had anticipated. I still cannot use the Wales dialect in the church services, but with the help of local young men by way of interpreting, I have been able to manage so far. These men have been very willing and patient, but of course there will always be a disadvantage in such method. I have tried to acquire the dialect but have found it to be a task in itself.

But one thing is certain if I am to be here at Wales next year. I must have a companion to work with in this field. My church work is limited as I must see to it that domestic needs are met. It is a trying experience when a probationer has a broom and a frying pan in one hand and the Word of Truth in another in leading people of Wales. I just must have that companion.

And that by the way is a problem in itself. I wrote you about Terza last fall and about ~~in~~ my difficulty with mother concerning the girl. From the letters received this winter from both mother and Terza, situation is that but encouraging. Mother still insists I have other than Terza. Terza is more or less

discouraged because of the gossips going on concerning our affair. I could of course go ahead with this plan with Terza, but strangely a mother has a peculiar influence. Sometimes I am afraid ~~that~~ I feel that mother is right about the girl.

Consequently, ^{my} mind is diverted as to the choice of a companion. Mother had picked one of her own choice for me, but that girl is out of the question. But in coming down to Wales from Barrow last fall, and as we had stopped at Kotzebue for a day, I met a very decent girl there who is a "half", that is, half white and half native. I had a dinner with the family and had a pleasant visit with them. Since then the girl and I have been corresponding, and in her late letters she intimates she would not mind preparing my meals for me here at Wales. Strangely she is an artist in culinary line, and I could use such an one very nicely in the service. Then too, she is interested in church activities as she is quite a singer, and is always in demand in church programs in Kotzebue. From her letters I firmly believe she would "accept" should I propose, but I will have to go on easy on the whole.

You approved of my going up north in the coming summer for my girl, and suggested I go on the "Holmes". Perhaps I will take that advantage and find out what the future holds for me as to the choice. The "Holmes" stops at Kotzebue, and that will give me a satisfactory time in speaking with the girl there before I proceed for Barrow. Should it be that my marriage is deferred this year I can "drag" mother to come with me to this post, so I will not have to ^{be} alone again next year. I think she will easily conceive why I cannot be alone next year.

Your suggestions ~~xx~~ will be greatly appreciated as before. I must take precautions with great care, as I fully realize my choice of a life companion will make or undo my success in the gospel ministry.

You may count on me to keep confidential assertions as to the various programs, or in ~~a~~ personal mentions of the workers up this coast. I hear Miss Stauffer is having a time with the Greists at Barrow. 'Nuff said. You know the rest.

Thanking you for your encouraging letters as I receive them regularly, I must close,

Yours faithfully,

Percy Spalvaak

(Narrative Report for Jan.15 to Feb.14, '35)

Presby. Mission
Wales, Alaska
February 16, 1935

To the Presby. Board
of National Missions
156 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

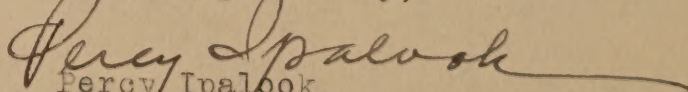
Dear Sir:

We are in the period of the year when we must watch how our coal supply is standing the forces of the Arctic nature. The coldest registered to date is around forty degrees (F.) below zero. This cold spell of the year about this time forced us somewhat to change our church program. We dispensed the Sunday evening service and have the main Sunday service in the morning, prior to Sunday School. Following this procedure, the heating of the church building is done once during the Sunday and not twice as before. Also due to extreme cold weather our attendance on Sunday services has been curtailed, but our mid-week services have been successful. With the cooperation of the local school teacher, we hold the mid-week services within the school building. The building, of course, is heated for day school, and with few chunks of coal the heat is retained for the evening service. Using this method the consumption of coal for mid-week services has been reduced fully one third.

Nothing unusual has happened within the village this month. The local boys are out of the village most of the time, attending to their trap lines. The trapping has been poor this year. Few foxes that were caught do not bring satisfactory prices. As a result some of our boys send out their fur to firms within the States. By this practise the local native store is losing business, and the store primarily is owned by the local native people. We as a race have much to learn as yet.

In this month we had one serious case of "grippe". The teacher who is our medical administrator, thought for a time the patient would not live. The crises for the patient came on the day of our mid-week prayer service. The missionary was called to the home of the family for prayer, and in the general prayer service that evening special petitions were made for the woman. Following that day she turned for the better. Three weeks later she was on her feet again, attended a prayer service and gave her heart to the Saviour. From this experience we feel that not only her body was restored, but that her soul also found peace. The more we have experiences of this type the more we pin our faith in intercessory prayer.

Yours respectfully,


Percy Ipabok,
Missionary in Charge.

C
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P
Y
Presbyterian Mission,
Wales, Alaska
December 17th, 1934.

Dear Doctor Somerndike:

This month our men have not been with us in the village, a larger portion of the period. First, for fully four days, every man available went over to Tin City, five miles from the village, to corral the reindeer. This is an annual affair, wherein the young deer are marked and some butchered for winter supply. Secondly, our trapping in Alaska was opened on the 15th of November. Selling of fox skins is the only means we secure our white brothers' supplies. Few foxes have been caught, or rather shot, as this shooting of foxes is an unusual method of fox hunting. Few families within the village do ^{not} need the much demanded fur, since their food supply and purchases of clothing depend upon it.

The Government traveling nurse for this section was with us from November 18th to December 7th. During her stay, many of our afflicted were well taken care of, as the whole village was inflicted with "mumps". Our medical authorities tell us that there is no necessity to quarantine the northern villages, as it is almost impossible to keep the natives from visiting. But we have a different opinion. However, there were no restrictions made, so our schools and the church services were continued during the "flu", although it curtailed our attendance.

Our special interest for the month was our celebration on Thanksgiving Day. In the morning we had our service. In the late afternoon, natives brought over their delicacies to the church building, and a feast was enjoyed by everyone in the village. The blackberries mixed with reindeer fat was the outstanding "dish", and as it is rare among the native possessions, it is thus saved only for special occasions. Following the dinner, few native stunts were displayed, the most interesting one being a high kicking. An object is suspended from the ceiling and the stunt is to kick that object with both feet at the same time. The "champion" of the evening kicked the object fully over six feet from the floor. But this is a game rapidly disappearing from the race, as others are coming in to replace native games. The older people are forever saying that the high-kicking has had its day.

We have resumed our choir practices, and since this is bringing us again to the Christmas season, many young folk responded to the first rehearsal. Miss Bannan had sent us special Christmas music and we do appreciate really good music for our Christmas program.

Several pastoral calls were made since many of our people are inflicted with "flu". One old lady had attacks of appendicitis. In her extreme painful experiences she several times sent for her missionary, and after prayers appeared a little more calm. We have very little medical practice in the village, so we often leave our major cases to the Great Physician. We cannot do otherwise.

Yours respectfully,

PERCY IPALOOK

Kivalina, Alaska
June 28, 1935

Dear Dr. Somerville:

Just a note to have you know that I am on my way to Barrow on the "Holmes". Capt. Backlund hesitated somewhat in giving me my passage, but after some urging he finally decided to take me along.

We stopped at Kotzebue for fully two weeks. As I had desired I saw the girl there and it seemed everything was worked out providentially. The girl had dropped her fiance last spring, and due to mother's severe oppositions I left for Derna of Barrow. Esther Berrymann of Kotzebue and I finally decided while my stay there to come together. Our big day was the 14th of this month, united by Esther's home church pastor, the Rev. L. H. Downs of Kotzebue, and of Friends (Quaker) Church. The pastor and his wife were very gracious to give us a rooming quarter in the manse while my stay there after marriage.

Capt. Backlund objected somewhat to my marrying this girl, thinking there is some disease in the family. I saw or rather Esther and I saw the local physician there and he declared Esther is all well.

I deem it to be a right move that

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I married Esther, for I have written
you concerning this girl early last spring.
I find her to be a real and true companion,
sympathetic, and unlike the usual
nature of "half-breeds" of Alaska.

Reluctantly, I left her at Kotzebue,
having made arrangements that she
follow by the "North Star". It will be
fully a month before I see her again.
Her mother had desired I wait for
the same boat, but since I wanted to
beat Barrow as soon as possible in
order to arrange for my supplies, I
could not do so.

Everyone who knows Esther tells
me I am rather fortunate in securing
this girl, as she is an excellent housekeeper
and well-meaning in every way. I expect
her to be a real help-meat in the
service and I am hoping I am
worthy of being a husband to such a
girl.

About that advance money I owed
you. I was sorry I had to do that
but circumstances compelled me to
do so, in order to secure a first-class
passage for the wife. Then again, she
had to get for herself the household
needs for the new field at Wainwright.
I'll the next time I must close. The ~~ink~~
pen is running dry and ^{no ink in sight}
Yours sincerely,
Percy Spalook